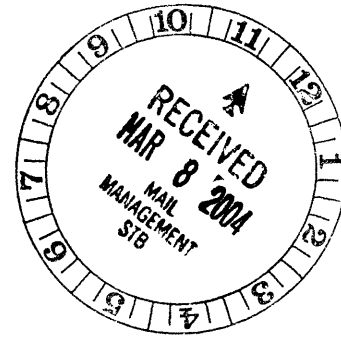


February 23, 2004

#E1-710
R21

Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
1925 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001



Attention: Rini Ghosh

Re: Finance Docket No. 34284

Dear Ms. Ghosh,

In response to the Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, I am submitting the following to be considered in the formal Scoping process.

I believe Vulcan's proposed quarry and proposed SGR rail line, regardless of where the railroad is constructed, are connected actions and should be studied in the same Environmental Impact Statement. The study should include direct impacts and alternatives to both projects, including no quarry and no rail line at all.

I am a resident living within the proposed railroad/quarry site area. My husband is a cattle and agricultural rancher and I am a housewife. We are both retired professionals. Our ranch is within 2 miles of the proposed site, just north of FM2676 on CR265 and is a family heritage homestead. We both enjoy the serenity and clean air of our countryside and hope to live out our lives in this setting.

My primary concern with the railroad and quarry is with the safety factor involved. Our main artery in and out of this area is F.M.2676. Vulcan has said that a rail overpass over 2676 is not necessary due to sparse population and that they will put up extra safety signs, etc. to warn people of the crossing. My point is that the unelevated crossing is going to prohibit emergency vehicles of all nature from reaching a great many families living east of CR353. Vulcan has stated that we would be serviced by Castroville instead, but in fact Castroville will NOT respond to us because our address is Hondo. Thus leaving us without emergency access of any kind. In addition, FM2676 is the only route for numerous school buses and the trains and trucks will greatly endanger the lives of all our children and grandchildren, among whom is our seven year old grandson. Also, this is an agricultural community and FM2676 is the primary route for farming vehicles and implements. This area is quickly becoming a bedroom community to San Antonio and there is heavy commuter traffic daily on 2676, a condition that Vulcan has ignored and has not checked out thoroughly. We have no desire to see this area changed into a dirty, dangerous, industrial area.

My other concerns involve air pollution from the dust that will come right over our property and will endanger our air supply and our health as well as the health of our cattle, our crops, and all the wildlife in the area. Also, our main source of water is the Edwards Aquifer. Vulcan has stated that there will be no danger to our water supply, but private studies have indicated exactly the opposite. In fact, maps of the Vulcan site show that the quarry itself is definitely IN the Edwards recharge zone and that their proposed fuel storage and maintenance area are also in the recharge zone. Once our water supply is contaminated there is no way to decontaminate it, leaving many hundreds of people, thousands of farm animals, and all wildlife without drinkable or usable water.

Since the settling of this area in the 1800's this has been a peaceful farming and agricultural area. I feel this quarry/railroad/trucking proposal will drastically change this area into a noisy, dirty, polluted industrial area, which none of us want.

Our roads were not built to handle the weight of numerous gravel trucks daily. Vulcan has stated that they will resurface the roads and maintain them. However, investigation into their existing sites indicates that this is not the case and that the taxpayers wind up paying for the roads thereby raising our taxes considerably, again which we do not want and feel is unfair.

Vulcan claims to be a good neighbor, but the proposed rail and quarry are certainly not in the best interest of the residents in the proximity of the project. I urge your consideration of the effect on the environment and the safety of the residents regarding air pollution, water quality and quantity for this and future generations.

Sincerely

Betty Arleen Balzen
Betty Arleen Balzen

cc: U.S. Congressman Henry Bonilla
U.S. Senator John Cornyn
Texas Senator Frank Madla
Texas Representative Timoteo Garza
Medina County Judge Jim Barden
Medina County Commisioner Royce Hartman